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Man held in gun, drug incident near school

- **Suspect fled through yards**
- **Tasered near doors of Columbine**
- **'Potential distribution level' narcotics, plus body armor found**

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG
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An “all hands on deck” response to a man with a gun ended after the suspect was chased through several yards and ultimately tasered — virtually at the doorstep of Columbine Middle School.

The incident occurred in the middle of the afternoon Friday.

Steven Jones, 33, was ultimately arrested on suspicion of drug offenses, although the investigation is not complete and formal charges are pending. According to jail records, he was being held on a \$60,000 bond. A court date was not available Friday evening.

An observant member of the public called police at about 2:45 p.m. to report a man, dressed in a black shirt and gray hat, waving a gun around in the 600 block of Roma Court.

“The reporting party got amazing information and was very detailed, and helped our officers take care of the problem in a pretty quick fashion,” Montrose Police Cmdr. Matt Smith said.

The witness supplied a detailed clothing and vehicle description, including a license plate number.

Police responded immediately, deeming the matter an imminent public safety risk.

Jones reportedly left the area in a vehicle with three other people (two of whom have also been jailed, per Smith), which drove north down South Mesa Avenue before stopping near the back field of Columbine Middle School.

Jones did not comply with instructions, but kept reaching back into the vehicle before fleeing on foot with a backpack, Smith alleged.

Officers pursued him east, through yards on Chatam and Bristol drives; Jones hopped several fences while trying to get away, Smith said.

People with Jones in the vehicle told other officers that he was armed, Smith also said.

The Colorado State Patrol responded to help with the situation; the police also requested the Montrose County Sheriff’s Office K-9, Tigo.

During a canvass of the neighborhood, officers spotted Jones, who ran back toward the middle school, Smith said.

There, he was taken down with a Taser “almost at the front doors of Columbine Middle School,” the commander reported.

Jones could be charged as a special offender because of the weapon and Smith said there might also be charges related to how close he was

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District attorney race draws first candidate

- **Current chief deputy DA announces bid**
- **Ryan heads up sex crimes unit**
- **Touts plans for expansion, more collaboration**

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG
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Seth Ryan is ready to apply his prosecutorial skills and business training to the office of District Attorney, in hopes of

expanding its mission.

Ryan, currently chief deputy district attorney for the 7th Judicial District, recently announced his run for top prosecutor spot and hopes to replace the term-limited DA Dan Hotsenpiller, after the 2020 election.

“I think being a district attorney is the best job in law, because at the end of the day, you always have the opportunity to do the right thing. At the end of the day, you feel like you’re doing something

important,” said Ryan, who has been with the DA’s office since 2007 and has for the past five years headed up the Special Victims Crime Unit. The unit primarily handles sex crimes prosecutions.

“I’m really passionate about this work, especially work



Seth Ryan

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Kitchen Closed

(Above) Jeremiah Quintin, kitchen manager for Christ’s Kitchen, holds a ‘Closed’ sign Friday after the charity organization served its last meal. The kitchen is looking for a new home after the building was purchased and rent became too high for the organization to function. (Right) Roger Heer, a local resident and diner at Christ’s Kitchen, plays the piano as the operation prepared to clean up and close down for the last time at its current establishment. (Leslie Brown/ Montrose Daily Press)



Grants help Haven House kids hit grade-levels

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG
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As its housing mission gained traction, Haven House Transitional Living Center staffers began noticing the broader ways homelessness affects families, particularly youngsters — they lagged behind their peers when it came to academic preparedness and performance.

“It seems parents and families, when they come, are sued to living in a survival mode. School and development could not be the priority because of the survival situation,” Haven House co-founder Larry Fredericksen said.

But the situation is improving, thanks to devoted tutoring and the grants that fund such instruction. Haven House received funding from the Buell Foundation for its early childhood development program. It also runs Love and Logic programs and parenting classes, facilitated by Hilltop and other entities.

“We’re pretty excited about what might



The children of Haven House celebrate a newly donated, 2017 passenger van that is used to take residents on outings and to meet other transportation needs. (Submitted photo/Haven House)

come out of (the grant). They’re just not going to be ready for school unless they get some help,” Fredericksen said.

Haven House provides transitional housing to families experiencing homelessness and meets them with resources tailored to

their situation; the goal is to change whatever habits may have contributed to them being in dire straits and transition them to self-sufficiency.

Right now, 14 children under the age of 6

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RYAN

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with victims of sexual assault and victims of violent crimes. I'm excited to take some of the things I've learned the past five years of prosecuting sex crimes and bring that into the office as a whole," added Ryan, who is running as a Republican.

The district attorney is, on a fundamental level, responsible for prosecuting violations of the state law within a judicial district. The 7th Judicial District is comprised of Montrose, Delta, Hinsdale, Gunnison, Ouray and San Miguel counties.

Ryan said that although there are staffing and funding limitations, the DA's office can do more.

"I think that it has to be expanded and should be expanded. We are also responsible for working with our community partners to make all of our communities safer," he said.

Heading up the Special Victims division was "an eye-opener" as to the importance of collaboration with law enforcement and other public agencies, Ryan explained.

"I think it's really helped to achieve a strong result in the cases I've been involved in during the past five years. I'd like to incorporate that collaborative process into the rest of the DA's office," he said.

"I think that there are some management techniques that can be utilized to improve how we do our jobs, such as goal-setting, prioritizing our cases, making sure our people are accountable to other groups, as well as each other. I think there is a lot of room for improvement in that area."

Ryan received his law degree and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Denver in 1997. Prior to entering the field of law, he worked as a stockbroker for Charles Schwab Inc.

"I would like to bring some of those business management practices into the field of law and start running this like a business would run its office," Ryan said.

In law school, the student's work tends to be "very solitary," while in business school, work is more team-centered, which trained him in collaboration, Ryan said.

He hopes to bring more of that to the office of district attorney.

"Successful prosecution doesn't come from people sitting in offices, making unilateral decisions. It comes from working with people who put a lot of work in on the ground," Ryan said.

"I spent eight years working as a stockbroker and I learned a lot about the value of customer service. I think we need to take that approach to our victims and serve them in a way that supports them."

The DA's office employs victim advocates who assist victims through the court process; Ryan just wants the office to do even more to help.

All cases have complex elements, particularly sex crimes and crimes of violence. Ryan acknowledged that not all victims may feel their needs were met and that some members of the public may not think sex crimes are taken seriously enough. Not every prosecution leads to a conviction, and that can be particularly disappointing for victims, he said.

"The decisions that we make, as far as how we go to trial, what we do at trial and whether we go to trial are all designed to support and protect a victim," Ryan said. "But ultimately, once we go

to trial, once we rest our case, it's out of our hands."

The district is dealing with an upswing in felony prosecutions. With about eight months under its belt, 2019 has seen more than 400 cases that began as felony filings — and that's just in Montrose County.

"We are dealing with more homicides in our district than we have in the previous 12 years I have been here," Ryan also said.

Ryan was lead prosecutor on the Norwood deaths case, in which a woman was recently convicted of the first-degree murder of her two daughters. That case has five defendants; a man has been convicted of fatal child abuse, while a second man pleaded guilty to an accessory charge. One of the two other women accused is also charged with first-degree murder and her trial is pending. The second has been deemed legally incompetent to face fatal abuse charges.

The prosecutor's office needs to adjust to better handle the growing number and complexity of cases, Ryan said.

"We need to be an office that's smarter, that's braver and that's more community-minded. When I say smarter, I mean ... there has to be more opportunity for training in any areas and skills that we actually face in trials," he said. If attorneys have the tools they need, and can collaborate with community partners such as law enforcement, Ryan sees better across-the-board results, including for victims.

"I think the more we're comfortable using the tools for successful trial work, the more successful results we're going to have at trial," he said.

The Legislature also hands challenges to district attorneys' offices when it changes laws or passes new ones. Next March, a law that removes felony penalties for possessing under 4 grams of drugs goes into effect.

"We are dealing with changes in the drug laws and trying to formulate ways to protect our community based on what our new constraints are there," Ryan said.

"For me, through this process, this isn't a process of trying to get the most votes. The process for me is also to figure out where the District Attorney's Office can improve and how I can make those improvements if elected."

He said he is ready for the other elements of the job, such as budgeting and management.

The office is primarily funded by counties within the district and grants.

"Budgets are tight everywhere. (Counties) have priorities they have to set, but I think we've gotten what we've asked for, for the past several years," Ryan said.

"... We're always looking at ways to improve our office in a fiscally responsible way instead of just throwing money at a problem."

Ryan lives in Montrose with his wife, Stacey. In addition to his work, Ryan serves on the Montrose Memorial Hospital Inc. board of directors.

Ryan is, as his workload allows, making the rounds through the counties in the district to gather feedback as to how the office of district attorney can improve.

"I'm open for people to come up to me, tell me about their concerns and voice any sort of frustrations and constructive criticisms so we can do better as an office," he said.

Ryan can be reached through his campaign site, ElectSethRyan.com.

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Haven House Executive Director Rose Verheul stands Thursday in front of the transitional shelter in Olathe. Verheul was named 'Unsung Hero' of the year from Tri County Resources Hilltop Family Services. (Andrew Kiser/ Montrose Daily Press file photo)

HAVEN

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at Haven House lag developmentally behind their peers, Fredericksen said.

The Buell Foundation is now helping fund programs for kids 0 - 5, including the recently started Creative Curriculum and First Steps. The first program addresses a variety of developmental issues among infants and kids younger than 6. The second is a reading program for 3- to 5-year-olds that helps prepare them for school. Older kids at Haven House who are struggling have been folded into the First Steps program, too.

Haven House has been testing children to see where they fall academically.

"We've found that we have children who are 6, 7, or 8 who are not even ready for kindergarten. We'll give them accelerated tutoring and get them into this First Steps reading program with the younger kids," Fredericksen said.

The programs work well with the Parents As Teachers program, a parenting class through Life Choices and Hilltop.

"It helps us pursue our mission. It also helps us in the sense that it's easier to work with (the parents)," he said.

"... By addressing parental issues, we believe there is a great chance, once a family leaves Haven House, the parent will be able to continue with the child's development."

Although many children tested behind grade level upon arriving at Haven House, the charity has doubled the levels of tutoring to good results, he said — after a year of tutoring efforts, more than half of the children had significantly closed the gap between them and their peers, and were either at, or exceeding, grade-level.

"We're pretty blown away by those outcomes," Fredericksen said.

Haven House continues to see a general need.

Last year at about this time, the center's number of residents was in the mid-fifties. But within the last week, the number stood at 74, more than 40

Haven House info

Haven House Transitional Living Center is at 4806 N. River Road in Olathe. Reach it at 970-323-5280 or info@havenhousehomeless.org. Haven House is also seeking silent auction items for its golf tournament fundraiser on Sept. 7 at the Cobble Creek course. To donate, inquire at Haven House, or call Lil or Larry Fredericksen at 970-626-5677. The golf tournament is \$80 per golfer, or \$40 for Cobble Creek members. The 80 available spots are filling up; reserve a spot ASAP at www.havenhousehomeless.org.

of whom are kids.

"We have our hands full," Fredericksen said.

"We run full and we average over two people per room to accommodate the needs and still have a short waiting list," he said, also noting the struggles of other nonprofits that assist low-income and homeless people.

But Haven House also continues to see generosity.

After spreading the word about lacking transportation resources, a big donation came through.

"We ended up with a sizable donation that allowed us to buy a 13-passenger van. That was awesome," said Fredericksen.

Further, he realized that as training and tutoring programs were added, existing space in the dining hall was simply inadequate.

With more funding, Haven House was able to set up a pre-fabricated building next to the main structure, which is now used for training and educational programs.

"There have been a lot of really good things happening at Haven House. The funding is not great, but it has kept the doors open," Fredericksen said.

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GUN

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to a school. Jones is also a habitual traffic offender, Smith said.

"We are so grateful for the state patrol and sheriff's office for lending a hand with this case. The patrol team that was on performed flawlessly under very stressful circumstances and our detectives division was also out assisting," he said.

"This was an all-hands-on-deck call, for sure. The public safety risk of someone actively waving a gun around in the middle of the afternoon, in the middle of our town, that is completely unacceptable.

"It's probably one of the most significant public safety and officer-safety

risks you can imagine. Clearly, a desperate person, brandishing a firearm and then willing to run through people's yards — I can't imagine how horribly this might have gone for people."

Without a swift response from assisting agencies, the police might not have been able to capture Jones so quickly, Smith added.

After Jones was in custody, Tigo and his handler helped the police locate the backpack Jones was said to have been wearing when he took off.

During the course of the investigation, authorities found a firearm, a box of ammunition, "potential distribution-level" narcotics, and, in the car, a body armor — bullet-resistant vest.

Police are investigating to determine whether

Friday's incident is linked to other recent, high-risk incidents.

"This kind of call, all the resources are expended ... because of the public safety risks it presented," Smith said, adding that all of the involved officers should be commended.

The frequency of these types of calls appears to be picking up, he also said.

"It is difficult to even describe how it feels nowadays to talk about these incidents. Just a few years ago, this would have been the biggest call of our year.

"And now it seems like we have a very significant call, it feels like, once a week."

Katharhynn Heidelberg is the Montrose Daily Press assistant editor and senior writer. Follow her on Twitter, @kathMDP.

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